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**Scientism: a Cult of «a Chosen Scientist»****Daniil V. Pivovarov\****Ural Federal University named after B.N. Yeltsin  
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*The article discusses two themes: the first one is the concept of scientism as the specific form of scientific religiousness; the second one is a cult of a chosen scientist as a version of scientism. Usually scientists allocate scientific geniuses with exclusively positive angelic properties, and ascients, on the contrary, find out in geniuses of any science only negative demonic features. The author puts forward a hypothesis, according to which the scientific genius in the maximal degree personifies a human nature, and this nature in an equal proportion is made by the beginnings of goods and harm, angelic and devil attributes. The given dialectic assumption is concretized in the text on an example of the analysis of the cult of Sir Isaac Newton.*

*Keywords: sociocentric religion, monism and pluralism, scientism, ascientism, scient, ascient, cult of a chosen scientist.*

**1. Scientism**

Scientism is 1) a cult of natural science; 2) worship of its experimental and mathematical methods; 3) absolutization of the role of scientists and scientific experts in a society, and also a cult of selected scientists-geniuses; 4) a belief that all making sense problems are scientifically soluble.

This cult develops in Western Europe from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, reaches apogee in the interval between the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century (in particular during the well-known epoch of scientific and technical revolution), and it starts to be discredited and weakened by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century under an impact of realities of life and in an antagonism with ascients. Scientism is closely connected with technocratic thinking which roots are incorporated in F. Bacon's "New Organon". Inside of "the temple of sciences"

scientism discredits the humanities poorly using experiment and mathematical language; natural sciences also cultivate methodology of empiricism, naturalism and antihistoricism.

Since the 30-es of the 19<sup>th</sup> century scientism gets into sociology through O. Kont's positivism. Attempts to build sociology on the sample of mechanics (G. Cary, A.Z. Kettle, D.S. Mill), or biology (G. Spenser, E. Dyurkgejm, V. Pareto) are undertaken. The Christian idea of a person as an image and similarity of God has originally refracted in scientism: a person is a creator, it "cannot wait for favors by nature" and its problem consists in alteration of the world to a measure of the needs and desires. Scientism is one of irrational effects of the developed Christian culture that are ideologically turning around against the Christian doctrine in forms of atheism

and materialism. Scientism is one of sociocentric religions of atheistic character.

At the same time scientism having generated in a bosom of Christian monasteries and having left them, is not something absolutely new and not having analogues in pre-Christian history. Most likely, scientism is a flesh from a flesh of paganism – the updated form of pagan magic, continuation of ancient magic tradition. Scientism being born from “natural magic” keeps with its internal ideological communication. The carrier of scientific consciousness is a scientist (*scient*). A scient is a person sincerely believing in omnipotence of his science both feeding sacred and enthusiastic feelings to scientists as attendants of “the temple of sciences”. During the Soviet time our domestic Philosophy of Science was “the servant of science”, sang of successes of natural sciences and borrowed positions of scientism. Today it gets features of “sophical criticism of science”.

L.M. Lopatin, the widely known Russian thinker, was right, when he called Philosophy to go “forward, from Immanuel Kant”. Lopatin considered that it is not necessary to trudge after positive sciences and to erect their generalization up to Absolute; the critical Philosophy armed by principles of doubt, evidence and reasonable probability should advance sciences instead of bowing to their authorities and traditions. For example, it is not necessary to consider the law of conservation of energy as “ontological truth” as this law is fair only for the physical phenomena, but it contradicts phenomena of mental self-activity and, hence, it is not necessary for understanding of life as a whole.

## 2. Monism and pluralism in sciences

As well as everything, science is dialectically contradictory being simultaneously the *identity* of various and *distinctions* in identity. Two

polar epistemic tendencies cooperate in past and modern sciences in a changeable proportion – authoritative monism and anarchical pluralism. Monism is interfaced today to the requirement of globalization in development of sociocultural environments, and pluralism is tied with postmodernism opposing unifications of truth and social orders.

Epistemic monism is anyhow associated with the belief in the fast “end of science”, namely, in performance in each science of the project under the motto “The only one and unique True Theory”. For example, John Horgan, the known American popularizer of science, assures that all basic scientific discoveries have already happened and the mankind needs further to adapt only, by means of technology, the opened theoretical truths for practice (Horgan, 2001, 479). Earlier A. Bergson, R. Genon, M. Scheler, M. Heidegger, O. Spengler, K.G. Jung and M. Eliade put forward this thesis about a fast decline of science. The same thesis was supported by some outstanding physicists: S. Weinberg, A.S. Companeets, R.P. Feynman, S.W. Hawking, etc. Melancholy on authoritative monism is embodied in such forms of scientism, as a cult of “a world leader in sciences” (for instance, worship the mechanics in the 17-18 centuries), a cult of “an advanced scientific school” (for example, reverence of T.D. Lysenko’s school in the USSR during the epoch of Stalinism), a cult of “scientist-coryphaeus” (let’s say, A. Einstein’s cult today).

Authoritative epistemic monism is directed on the statement ideological unity (total identical thinking, rallying together) among scientists, pupils, people and mankind as a whole. It is felt, first of all, in attempts to design a certain “uniform scientific picture of the world” (SWP) and to impart it, in the beginning, to the scientific community, and then to all people. The quasi-religious world outlook potential is given to SWP intentionally or spontaneously; and SWP is sacralized originally.

Duty for scientists and general public to profess the official SWP is provided with corresponding sociocultural institutes (ideological services of state machinery, church, party in power, school) and fixed in such word-combinations and phrases as: “the temple of science”, “science approves”, “science learns”, “it contradicts science” and so forth.

Similar monism sometimes promotes strengthening and growth of science, and sometimes, on the contrary, it becomes the reactionary factor. For example, the majority of historians of science approves that paradigm of mechanicism generated during the first scientific revolution (1543-1687) and legalized by the Catholic Church has played basically a progressive role in natural sciences in the 17-18 centuries. However today many experts believe, that this paradigm that is still imposed totally to scientists as the general scientific maxima becomes outdated and even harmful.

### 3. Ascientism

The opposite tendency of gnoseological anarchism (or epistemic pluralism) resists to hopes of priests of “the temple of sciences” for approach of a light era of “the unique True Theory”, discredits illusion of “the end of science”, and it undermines belief in a selected branch of science, chosen school, paradigm, or any person. As a matter of fact, this intrascientific tendency carries antiscientistic character and very much reminds atheistic criticism of religious faiths.

Ascientism (antiscientism) initially resists scientism. Ascient is an ideological antipode and opponent of scientism discrediting the cult of science and belief in infallibility of scientists, in ability of science to incur a role of the public leader. Radical medieval fideists-churchmen were the first ascients. And today not only seminary students-fideists, but also numerous supporters of secular philosophy (philosophy of life,

existentialism, personalism, etc.), an appreciable part of scientists and scientists-humanists join to ascientism. An average ascient-scientist believes that science, by its nature and essence, will exist eternally (similarly to morals or art) and in the future this form of human spirit as a whole will remain former, as now.

Ascientism has a set of gradation, since radical condemnation secular (not monastic and left from under authority of church) science as devil instigation and finishing the most liberal ascientism that equalizes science in the rights with art, religion and other forms of public spirit and rejects only an estimation of science as maximum form of knowledge and wisdom. It rejects also cults of scientists-geniuses and absolutization of any scientific schools. Opposition of scientism and ascientism can be described in different aspects, including the aspect of special religious opposition, namely as the conflict among pagan pantheism (together with its special magic humanism) and Christian monotheism.

Horror stories about a decline of science periodically revive and come to naught being replaced with the slogan about omnipotence of scientific progress. Similar, for example, happens under the influence of deep ideological crisis, which then was replaced by revolution in Physics in the beginning and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The need of mankind for fundamental science in due course never disappears; on the contrary, this need increases more and more. Therefore science never died and today does not die off, but it only periodically updates its historical forms (Pivovarov, 2012, 118-127). It is not the end of science “in general” that is seen in the come of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but only the end to unreasonable claims of science for possession of the maximum true and the right to be the supreme pastor of mankind is visible now.

Sacramental scientism of last times is imperceptibly superseded nowadays by profane

science which does not wish more to rise above people's life, their morals, religion and art. For instance, "poetry" in theoretical Physics that has been dominated over the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the form of desire to create conceptual integration and to build "theories of all" (remember myths about Big Bang, black holes, quarks, bootstrap, virtual vacuum and so forth) today gives up the place to prose of the differentiated highly specialized knowledge, empirical researches of narrow themes and statement of new local problems, important for mankind.

Thus, dialectic synthesis of alternative declarations of radical sciences and ascetics – or "the end of science", or "eternal and constant continuity of sciences" – consists in understanding growth of science as "a unit line of measures" (Hegel), or as emergent periodic "removal" of the developed science in qualitatively new forms of its existence.

#### 4. A cult of "a chosen scientist"

Now we shall discuss more in detail such a specific form of scientism as a phenomenon of an idolized scientist. In science from time to time persons-authorities affirm and dethrone, the reference to which works as obligatory and commensurable with reverence of sacred books (for example, cults of Aristotle, Newton, Einstein and so forth). The rumor attributes to idols-scientists supervaluable attributes. Their doctrines-theories are carefully preserved against criticism by various ideological bodies and institutes. Apparently, the cult of "a scientist-coryphaeus" is moderately useful and moderately harmful to science.

Here it is useful to recollect axiomatic history about Aristotle's heritage. The mankind somehow has been highly esteeming Aristotle for already more than two thousand years. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century Thomas Aquinas recognized the doctrine of this best pupil of Plato as absolute

truth, and the Catholic Church has officially approved and idolized Thomism. Physics and Biology of Stagiritus were the important step forward in ancient Greek science, but later some of his parascientific inventions began to interfere seriously with growth of the European natural sciences. Only during an epoch of the Renaissance and New time critically conceiving physicists and biologists have managed to overcome, for example, following erroneous Aristotle's statements: "the heavier the body, the more quickly it falls", "bugs have eight legs", "men have more teeth than women" and so on.

It is considered to be that science is born from magic overcoming steps of astrology, numerology, alchemy and other occult employment. From here it is logical to assume that science inherits angelic-demonic essence of magic sorcery. A magician aspires to find authority above things and people. He leans on cunning of his reason and intuitively learns secret laws of nature and society. The magician's essence is shamanism and his creativity is carried out by means unknown to usual people. A magician does not worship spirits, but orders to them.

Unlike other geniuses, in scientific geniuses the kind and malicious, the high and low, the sincere-healthy and psychopathic wonderfully supplement each other as in shamans. Arthur Schopenhauer considered geniuses as monsters with excessive energy of will and the sensitivity deviating norm. Cesare Lombroso postulated communication of genius with mental frustration. According to G. Le Bon, having climbed up a top of the social pyramid a scientific genius is fixed on it under condition of constant loan of productive forces at the people who are being below. Concerning "a cult of a scientist" M. Heidegger is right, in my opinion, when he notices: "The one who deeply thinks that at the same time is mistaken deeply" because discrepancy or even falsity of the theoretical basis of everyone of "the

ingenious doctrine” will be found out sooner or later.

Angelic and demonic sacrality are combined in a cult of “a chosen scientist” paradoxically. The scientific demon, free from norms of high morals, is one of dark, but inevitable attributes of the light scientific genius. In the image of Faust, the gloomy German genius, Johann Goethe has evidently shown the “unity of genius and villainy” (the kind and spiteful genius) in such exemplary scientists. Faust signs the contract with the devil on a condition that Mephistopheles will serve him, while Faust will not calm down being happy with what he has reached, and while he will not beg “to stop an instant”. Faust is a titan, a rebel. He encroaches on traditional norms, violates the rights of other people, and he is the very original cause of set of deaths (of Margarita, their child, her mother, her brother).

As a matter of fact, a scientific genius who subjects to refined torture natural objects for the sake of experiments corresponds to Mephistopheles slogan: “I eternally want harm and eternally I create the blessing”. However, it is possible to replace this slogan the equivalent saying of Dante Alighieri reflecting irrational consequences of large-scale scientific activity: “The road to hell is paved with good intentions”.

At close studying real biographies of “godlike scientists”, in them, as a rule, it is possible to find not only pleasant angelic pluses, but disgusting demonic minuses also. In this sense “a chosen scientist” is sharply dialectic, similar two-faced Ianus. The ambivalent essence of science “in general” in its indissoluble unity of light and dark spheres concentrates in him. A scientist who is recognized by all as “the leader of scientists” can serve as a good representative sample of scientific life, absorbed in itself features of black and white magic. Concerning inconsistent scientific community as the whole, such sacralized

representative personifies the concrete identity of an ideal and an idol, sacred goods and a villain.

If consistently to be guided by principles of dialectics, the cult of an idolized scientist should be estimated more precisely as identity and distinction of positive and negative features of his character that have together allowed such a scientist to take advantage (quite often breaking moral standards) works of the predecessors. He is able to generalize originally some isolated ideas, to rally the devoted pupils around himself and, at last, to climb up top of the scientific Olympus. Through a prism of norms of high morals it is easy to see that something in cults of outstanding scientists, undoubtedly, deserves approval, and something – resolute censure. Therefore the dialectic estimation of the cult of “a chosen scientist” essentially differs from corresponding alternative estimations of rectilinear sciences and ascents. Both those and others are partially right, as in a scientific genius, really, there are bound great and low. But sciences are mistaken not noticing the malicious and low beginnings in a scientific genius, and ascents – the beginnings of goods and greatness.

Worship “a chosen scientist” inherent in sciences always occurs by hushing up this idol any negative or ordinary features and attributing to a super-scientist exclusively noble and even superhuman quality. A real scientist, clearly, uplifts “an exemplary scientist” up to heavens being touched by kalokagathia that is inherent in his idol – by unity of truth, goods and beauty. Ascent, on the contrary, finds out in this or that idol of sciences only the most low and criminal and indignantly condemns the attributes really inherent in “coryphaeus”, homophobia, envy, flattery, careerism, orientation to methods of a deceit and plagiarism, skill unworthy means to eliminate critics and competitors.

We shall consider an eloquent example unilateral (or only with a sign “+”, or only with

a sign “—”) estimations Newton’s cult by sciends and ascients. I ask readers to correlate mentally their estimations to the hypothesis stated above about the scientific genius as an evident representation of dualism of goods and harm in magic and science; there are no great scientific geniuses outside of such dualism.

### 5. Newton’s cult

The cult of Sir Isaac Newton is widespread everywhere, but mostly it is characteristic for England where sciends allocate the Cambridge genius with all conceivable virtues. There is the following inscription on his monument in Trinity-college: “His reason surpassed a human sort”. The inscription on his tomb says: “Here is buried Isaac Newton, Knight, who by a strength of mind almost divine, and mathematical principles peculiarly his own, explored the course and figures of the planets, the paths of comets, the tides of the sea, the dissimilarities in rays of light, and, what no other scholar has previously imagined, the properties of the colours thus produced. Diligent, sagacious and faithful, in his expositions of nature, antiquity and the holy Scriptures, he vindicated by his philosophy the majesty of God mighty and good, and expressed the simplicity of the Gospel in his manners. Mortals rejoice that there has existed such and so great an ornament of the human race!”.

Unit of force in SI-system, many laws and theorems, craters on the Moon and Mars are named in honor of Newton. 300-years anniversary of Newton has been widely noted in the USSR on a boundary of 1942-1943 in days of the Battle of Stalingrad. Richard Dawkins, the well-known English popularizator of science, has even suggested celebrating the birth of Isaac Newton on December, 25<sup>th</sup> instead of Christmas.

But ascients widely distribute today information of opposite property about Newton’s person (especially on the Internet). They say that

Newton fell into a progressing psychosis when he has professionally borrowed in science. He began to hate people, especially, women; he could not take any criticism. He ran into fury at a hint on objection; distributed the constant irritability to colleagues, and did not have close friends. However, there are data that by an old age Newton had features not peculiar to him before – good nature, condescension, sociability.

Historians of science approve that Newton adhered to Arian heresy in a pointed manner did not recognize the Trinity, though he was a member of college of the Sacred Trinity in Cambridge. He became a member, and later the master of Masonic lodge. Newton took a great interest in ancient pagan Roman religion of goddess Vesta (the virgin goddess of the hearth, home, family and a part of each fire) and in Rosicrucian alchemy and it was not welcomed by Christian church. Some authors write that Newton was not a fair person, easily went on forgery and falsification. It is noted also, that his lectures were rather boring, and students attended them rarely.

Ascients also assure, that mathematician Isaac Barrow, the teacher of Newton, has attached his pupil to the Luciferian Order of “Free masons”, and then in 1669 handed him the physical and mathematical faculty at Cambridge University. Barrow privately presents to Newton the translated treatises of Omar Khayyam with exact calculations on physics, astronomy and mathematics – in order to give scientific weight to his pupil. Newton at once receives master’s degree having claimed calculations of the Arabian scientist as his own. He steals from Khayyam’s compositions also a way of improvement of a telescope, and due to this theft the plagiarist becomes well-known at once.

Today it is not a secret that Isaac Newton in a pointed manner ignored Robert Hooke’s name who, possibly, was the pathbreaker of the law of universal gravitation, and also Gottfried

Leibniz's name – most likely the original author of differential and integral calculus. Newton has appropriated a scientific priority in corresponding areas of Physics and mathematics. There is a proved opinion that it was exactly Newton who was involved (being the president of the Royal society) in destruction of all portraits of Hooke, his opponent.

Here are opinions of academicians S.I. Vavilov and V.I. Arnold about authorship in opening the law of universal gravitation.

“If to connect in one all assumptions and ideas of Hooke on movement of planets and the gravitation were stated by him within almost 20 years we shall meet almost all main conclusions of Newton's “The Beginnings”, only stated in the uncertain and weak form; a physicist S. I. Vavilov writes, <...> at the same time before us it is not simply the idea casually thrown, but undoubtedly the fruit of a long work. <...> Aimless struggle for priority has blackened Hooke's good name, but it is time to history, later almost three centuries, to give due to everyone” (Vavilov, 1961, 104).

A mathematician V.I. Arnold tells, that in one Hooke's letter to Newton (dated Jan. 6, 1680) “there are such important words: “I assume that an attraction in inverse proportion to a square of distance up to the center, according to Kepler's assumption of dependence of speed from distance. <...> this law of return squares is, apparently, the Hooke's theory of gravitation. <...> Under the initiative of an astronomer Edmond Halley (1655-1742) Newton wrote the work with a detailed statement of the results under the title “The Mathematical beginnings of natural philosophy” and sent it to the Royal society on April, 28th, 1686. Hooke was never mentioned in this manuscript” (Arnold, 1989, 16,18,39).

V.I. Arnold approves Leibniz's complaint about Newton's steeling, without the put

references, differential and integral calculus the following: “Newton too led himself in this history not in the best image. He collected the commission which problem was to understand with a question on a priority and to pass the final decision. Newton by then was already the president of the Royal society; therefore numerous scientists were included in structure of the commission for giving it greater impartiality from the different countries, as he said. The commission considered the problem on priority dispute and published the report. The report of the international authoritative impartial commission was preceded with such words: “Nobody can be the judge to himself and testify on the case. Such judge will be the judge unjust, and laws of all countries will be trampled if someone is admitted as the lawful witness on own case. Further there is a justification of Newton and Leibniz's charge in unreasonable claims on the results not published by Newton. Subsequently, after death of Newton, it was found out from his papers that Newton supervised over drawing up the report, and pathetic charge unjust judges were written personally to them, and “numerous scientists not from England” were only two, and only one of them was a mathematician” (Arnold, 1989, 16,18,39).

What Sir Isaac Newton was actually? I believe, in this originally scientific genius it paradoxically was combined on what sciences and ascients insist. But it hardly is reasonable to be adjoined to enthusiastic sciences, to adherents of their cult. As if to the fierce dispute on this question between domestic radical sciences and ascients, not wishing to concede each other, their right to freedom of belief is guaranteed by the known legal law of the Russian Federation on a freedom of worship and confession.

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## Сциентизм:

### культ «избранного ученого»

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*Две темы обсуждаются в этой статье, во-первых, понятие сциентизма как специфическая форма научной религиозности, во-вторых – культ избранного ученого как разновидность сциентизма. Обычно сциенты наделяют научных гениев исключительно положительными ангельскими свойствами, а асциенты, напротив, обнаруживают в гениях науки только отрицательные демонические черты. Автор выдвигает гипотезу, согласно которой научный гений в максимальной степени воплощает в себе человеческую природу, а эта природа в равной пропорции составлена началами добра и зла, ангельскими и дьявольскими атрибутами. Данное диалектическое предположение конкретизируется в тексте на примере анализа культа сэра Исаака Ньютона.*

*Ключевые слова: социоцентрическая религия, монизм и плюрализм, сциентизм, асциентизм, сциент, асциент, культ избранного ученого.*

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